

VZCZCXRO4422
PP RUEHBC RUEHDA RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #3833/01 3280930
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 240930Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4489
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003833

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: Baghdad Services Committee

REF: BAGHDAD #3708

¶1. SUMMARY: The Baghdad Services Committee chaired by Dr. Ahmed Chalabi pressed forward on November 20th with a high number of attendees, including representatives from the city administration and the Baghdad Operations Command (security). Given the number of participants representing various interests, discussions were equally as varied. Specific decisions were reached and reports ordered. END SUMMARY.

Baghdad Services Committee Reaches Several Decisions

¶2. The Baghdad Operations Command (BOC) agreed to remove any unnecessary traffic barriers in Adnon Square to ease traffic congestion. The BOC also agreed to set up at least two check points between Adnon Square and Adimiyah Bridge. The Amanat announced that the first Saturday of every month will be designated as Baghdad Clean up Day and requested assistance from all ministries including vehicles and equipment. Finally, the Ministry of Electricity(MoE) promised three continuous days of power per week to specific irrigation pumping stations, commencing next week. The MoE also promised to replace a broken power line to the suburb of Sab al Bor.

Good Attendance Results in Lots of Discussion

¶3. Attendance was high at this week's meeting, with representatives from the Ministries of Defense, Health, Electricity, Oil, Transportation and Trade and Commerce. Representatives from former Deputy Prime Minister Zobai's office, the Baghdad Amanat, the Baghdad Operations Command (BOC) and several local councils also attended.

¶4. Unlike previous meetings, the Baghdad Amanat played a central role in this meeting, including the recommendation for two of the three suggestions adopted. The Amanat reported that they delivered a list of school supplies needed throughout Baghdad to the Ministry of Education (MoEd), but have not yet received a response. Chalabi suggested that the Amanat and the MoEd work together to conduct this inventory. (Note: Not a single representative from the MoEd has yet attended Chalabi's weekly meetings. This is even after Chalabi reported their absence to Prime Minister Maliki at the Friday, November 16 I-ESC. End Note) The Committee charged the Amanat with conducting a review of bus terminals in Baghdad, working in cooperation with the BOC and the Ministry of Transportation to remove trespassers, provide security and to get them fully operational.

¶5. A representative from the Reconciliation Committee had several questions for the Amanat, particularly on waste drainage trucks. The Amanat noted that they received 50 new trucks and will provide the Reconciliation Committee with use of 10 of those trucks. They emphasized that Amariyah and Assaleyah are in great need of these trucks. The Amanat also responded to inquiries about the Tayji landfill noting that they are in communication with a company that

will separate the hazard waste. Dr. Chalabi raised the issue of needed emergency lighting in Baghdad stating that if funding is not secured through the governorate, then the Baghdad Amanat will be responsible for funding. Finally, the Amanat and the Ministry of Oil (MoO) are to provide a report on the supply of empty gas cylinders for the residents of Baghdad at the next Services Committee meeting.

¶6. The Inspector General of Health discussed several issues, and requested that the MoEd work cooperatively with the MoH to ensure quality drinking water for schools. The IG announced that three doctors were named as representatives to the subcommittee established at last week's services committee meeting to work on the transfer of Al Karkh hospital to the MoD. Primary Health Centers (PHCs) were also discussed, particularly the transfer of the Nahrawan Center which is 100% complete. Dr. Adel requested that a team from MoH and a team from the USM-I meet to review PHCs before handover. Dr. Chalabi suggested that an engineer from the Amanat conduct the inspection of PHCs in Baghdad on behalf of both teams. ITAO Director Mark Tokola agreed that he and the Embassy Health Attach will meet with the MoH regarding the Nahrawan Center handover. Dr. Chalabi asked the MoH for a plan to staff PHCs. Other issues briefly discussed included the re-employment of previously dismissed MoH personnel and the creation of a plan to give apartments to returning doctors.

¶7. Running out of time, the Ministry of Trade and Commerce representative discussed only a few specific food ration shortages, rather than the detailed report requested by Dr. Chalabi at the previous meeting. She particularly noted that baby milk has been delayed since July. Baghdad is currently short 65 tons. The delay was blamed on increasing prices of baby milk, but Chalabi quickly dismissed that as inexcusable. Chalabi requested that the representative provide the detailed food shortage list as well as possible solutions to existing bottlenecks in the distribution

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process at the next meeting.

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Chalabi Champions Banking Reform and Real Estate Development
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¶8. Dr. Chalabi stated that there are 216 operating bank branches in Baghdad, which is less than one bank for every 200,000 Iraqis. Cashing checks presents a real problem, but not one that warrants opening more banks. Rather, he suggested improvements to loan procedures and sought other recommendations. He requested a meeting with the Ministry of Finance and asked if the Embassy's Treasury Attach could present specific recommendations to the committee at next week's meeting.

¶9. Chalabi noted that 5 million housing units are needed over the next two years. Currently, the Government of Iraq employs or pays pensions to 60% of Iraqi's working age population and cannot, according to Chalabi, absorb more people. However, a real estate development initiative would provide employment opportunities, create a base for the Iraqi economic sector and provide needed housing. He suggested the establishment of a real estate bank.

Comment

¶10. For the past four weeks, Dr. Chalabi has presented his services committee's recommendations and updates at the weekly I-ESC. Last week, Chalabi and some of the other service committee members attended the Joint Planning Commission (JPC), to receive an overview of Baghdad projects, including unfunded projects. As an early sign of inter-committee relationship development, Chalabi's staff intends to have a representative attend the JPC. Also, the JPC coalition leaders hope to send a representative to Chalabi's committee, pending Chalabi's approval. Moreover, at this week's Deputy I-ESC meeting, a request was made for a JPC representative to attend that meeting, reconnecting the I-ESC and JPC. (Note: Less than a month ago, the I-ESC Secretariat uninvited former DPM Zobei's staff to the

I-ESC and Deputies I-ESC, terminating the then-link between the JPC and the I-ESC. End Note)

¶11. Initial steps have been taken to institutionalize Chalabi's services committee. Questions remain regarding this committee's official role, the complete link between other entities addressing service delivery and, of course, their efficiency. We particularly are encouraged when the GoI independently not only initiates and completes service projects, but creates institutional mechanisms and relationships to address service delivery and maintenance.

Crocker